

REAL TIME FAX-OVER-PACKET PACKET LOSS COMPENSATION

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 Not applicable.

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable.

10 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to facsimile transmission over packet networks. In particular, the present invention relates to the repair of scan line errors in fax over packet transmissions.

15 When dedicated facsimile devices communicate directly, a series of command signals are exchanged which allow the devices to communicate. The control information includes training to accommodate the speed and specifications available at both ends of the transmission and communications to ensure that the
20 connection is not corrupted or interrupted. The exchange of data is direct, without delay or translation. Because of this direct connection, facsimile equipment is designed to function properly with a constant connection and not in an environment where the connection is intermittent or interrupted. If a facsimile device
25 detects an interruption/error in transmission, the facsimile device interprets this as a transmission error and will time out

and disconnect or attempt to retrain the current transmission. Retraining, if successful, will often result in a slower transmission speed in an attempt to avoid additional errors, hang-up and/or loss of transmission. Newer facsimile devices may
5 also incorporate error correction mode capabilities which will compensate for limited interruption/error in transmission of image data.

When facsimile devices are connected through a packet
10 network, they are not directly connected. The facsimile information is packetized at a sending end, sent over the packet network and reassembled into a facsimile format at the receiving end before presentation to the receiving facsimile device. The Connection over a packet network is not a constant connection and
15 often experiences line delays, errors and/or packet loss which must be hidden from the facsimile device by a gateway in order to avoid error detection by a facsimile device attempting to communicate over a packet network.

20 Typically, low speed (T.30 hand shaking) control data is protected by simple redundancy techniques in fax over packet applications to combat network packet loss. The repetition of control data helps to insure that the facsimile devices receive an essentially uninterrupted control signal even in the event of
25 packet loss, essentially fooling the facsimile device into believing that it has an uninterrupted direct constant connection

to the facsimile device on the other side of the connection. The repetition of control data has negligible network bandwidth impacts because of the small size of control data and produces significant benefits to call success rates.

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High-speed, large size, image data is not protected through repetition, because of undesirable increases in network bandwidth requirements. Prior to the present invention, the loss of image data causes page errors in the receiving facsimile device, causes
10 loss of connection and excessive retraining which can significantly increase the time of transmission and loss of image data results in errors in the printed document. Error Correction Mode (ECM) employed by most newer fax devices can combat packet loss to a limited extent but may only result in the
15 problems associated with excessive retraining and retransmissions.

In ECM mode of operation, when network packet loss exceeds two to three percent, ECM becomes ineffective and leads to
20 consistent call failures when high-speed data is not protected over the network. When packet loss exceeds two to three percent, it has been observed that there is continuous data retransmission requests and re-trains. Eventually, the facsimile device gives up and terminates the call unsuccessfully. Disabling the ECM
25 mode in packet loss environments exceeding two to three percent would improve performance.

In non-ECM modes of operation, the high-speed image packet loss translates to image errors at the receiving facsimile device. Newer facsimile devices will employ techniques to compensate for these page errors, but retrains can occur due to perceived bad line qualities. The retrains lead to longer call durations and as the number of pages to send via facsimile increases, so does the likelihood of a call failure due to excessive retrains. Also, in the field, poor legacy facsimile devices have been observed which cannot tolerate any received page errors. These facsimile devices terminate the call abruptly and go on hook in the middle of a page if packet loss occurs.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Based on the above described problems with facsimile over packet network transmission, the present invention teaches a method of improving facsimile over packet transmission performance in a packet loss environment. The device and method taught by the present invention achieves the following objectives:

The apparatus of the present invention minimizes implementation complexity and maintains high channel density.

The apparatus and method of the present invention conceals all page errors due to network packet loss from the receiving facsimile device for calls which do not employ ECM.

The apparatus and method of the present invention are compatible with a fax relay operation.

The apparatus and method of the present invention
5 accomplishes the above objectives and the further benefits of the elimination of retrains due to packet loss which leads to improved facsimile performance.

Call success is improved with legacy facsimile devices that
10 cannot tolerate page data errors with the apparatus and method taught herein. Because the invention is able to maintain minimal intervention so that only page errors due to network packet loss are concealed. Page errors due to equipment error or PSTN errors will be passed through and handled by the end point facsimile
15 devices. The algorithm of the present invention operates in the re-modulating gateway with no dependencies on the demodulating gateway.

Overall page quality is still degraded due to packet loss,
20 however, the call will not be terminated, resulting in over transmission success. The receipt of degraded facsimile is preferable to no receipt. If necessary, the recipient can request retransmission if the extent of degradation is unacceptable. The extent of degradation depends on the page
25 content, e.g. text, pictures, density and the like. Therefore, call success rates are drastically improved.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a better understanding of the nature of the present invention, reference is had to the following figures and detailed description, wherein like elements are accorded like reference numerals, and wherein:

Figure 1 is a diagram of the interconnection of facsimile over packet network.

Figure 2 is an exemplary logic flow diagram of the method of implementation of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

In an non-ECM environment, only Modified Huffman MH and Modified Read MR page compression techniques are available. The algorithm of the present invention for concealing page errors due to packet loss is similar for Modified Huffman (MH) and Modified Read (MR) page compression modes.

Figure 1 illustrates the connection of a first facsimile device 11 through a local gateway 15 to a packet network 17. At the other side of the packet network 17 is a gateway 19 and a second facsimile device 21. Prior to the implementation of the present invention, a facsimile transmission from facsimile device 11 is transmitted through gateway 15 where it is packetized and

sent to packet network 17. Packet data is received from the packet network 17 by gateway 19 and reassembled in proper order in a buffer at the gateway 19. The image data was then played out from the buffer to the receiving facsimile device 21 as it
5 was reassembled.

The facsimile device 21 assembles the image data into scan lines and prints the facsimile. In the event of packet loss, the image data played out to the receiving facsimile device 21 would
10 contain errors because it is incomplete. The receiving facsimile device 21 would detect a page error and react accordingly.

The scan line repair algorithm of the present invention is illustrated in Figure 2. Image data received by gateway 19, from the packet network 17, is parsed into scan lines. The Scan line data is buffered and not played out to the local Facsimile Termination Equipment (FTE) 21 until the end of the scan line is
15 expected with no packet loss.

If packet loss is expected before the end of the current
20 scan line, the buffered scan line data is discarded and zero fill is played out to the local FTE 21, replacing the damaged scan line data.

In a first embodiment of the invention, the scan line(s) portion of the image lost due to packet loss is removed from the image and the remaining image is shifted up. This embodiment requires the least implementation complexity, and least
5 additional storage. Reduction in computational complexity and storage requirements are desirable because they reduce costs.

In alternative embodiments, the lost scan lines can be replaced with blank lines or with a repetition of the previous
10 scan line. Placing a blank scan line will provide the facsimile receiver with information indicating that a packet loss error was detected and compensated for. Implementation of alternative embodiments requires determination of the resolution of the received scan lines and a determination of the number of lost
15 scan lines. In order to replay the last acceptable scan line, the apparatus must have the capacity to separately buffer that scan line or lines.

The algorithm continues playing out zero fill until the
20 next scan line is detected. Once the receiving packets are synchronized to the start of a new scan line, the new scan line data is again buffered and the process is repeated.

The algorithm replaces scan line data in which packet loss
25 occurs, concealing page errors from the receiving facsimile device.

The reduced code complexity is due primarily to the concept of scan line deletion as compared to replaying previous scan line data and/or lines. While repeating scan lines may in some instances improve printed page quality, it has greater code and data memory requirements and can cause a reduction in image quality dependant upon the image content.

Because many varying and different embodiments may be made within the scope of the inventive concept herein taught, and because many modifications may be made in the embodiments herein detailed in accordance with the descriptive requirements of the law, it is to be understood that the details herein are to be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.